



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## STATE OF TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

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### **Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards Recognize Positive Impacts Across the Tennessee**

*Gary W. Barrigar of Carter County Receives the Robert Sparks Walker Lifetime Achievement Award*

**NASHVILLE** - Deputy Governor Claude Ramsey and Environment and Conservation Commissioner Bob Martineau presented the 2012 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards at the Ellington Agriculture Center campus in Nashville today, recognizing 11 honorees whose efforts have made a positive impact on Tennessee's natural resources.

"Today's award ceremony honored groups and individuals across the state for their commitment to healthier and more sustainable communities," Ramsey said. "I want to commend all of this year's honorees for their hard work and for their dedication to Tennessee's natural resources."

In its 26<sup>th</sup> year, the Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards program recognizes exemplary voluntary actions that improve or protect our environment and natural resources with projects or initiatives that are not required by law or regulation. A panel of 36 professionals representing agricultural, conservation, forestry, environmental and academic professionals judged more than 100 nominations and selected this year's award recipients based on criteria including on-the-ground achievement, innovation and public education.

"The ongoing protection of our land, water and air are essential components to our quality of life," added Martineau. "This year's award winners have put forth an extraordinary amount of effort, and we are pleased to be in position to honor their commitment to environmental stewardship and for leaving a positive legacy for all Tennesseans."

Ten awards were presented to individuals, community organizations and government agencies in a number of environmental categories. The winner of one additional honor, the Robert Sparks Walker Lifetime Achievement Award, also was announced at the August 24 ceremony.

The 2012 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award winners are:

#### **The Robert Sparks Walker Lifetime Achievement Award**

The Robert Sparks Walker Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Carter County native Gary W. Barrigar, an award-winning science teacher and long-time advocate of Tennessee's environmental heritage.

"Each year, we recognize an individual who has devoted a lifetime of exemplary service to environmental protection or conservation stewardship in Tennessee," said Martineau. "Gary Barrigar has imparted the value and importance of the natural world to thousands of students, parents, administrators and various organizations throughout his 40-year career by using nature as a classroom and integrating environmental education into daily curriculum."

In 2000, Barrigar was selected to chair the Tennessee State Board of Education Science Standards Committee that developed standards for high school courses in Ecology and Environmental Science that remain in use to this day. Barrigar also served as the president of the Boone Watershed Partnership from 2005-2012, growing the multi-faceted partnership from a loosely organized group to a highly effective 501(c)(3) organization that works to identify and address water resource issues in the Boone watershed, located in East Tennessee and parts of Virginia.

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Barrigar also has served in a number of leadership roles with various environmental and conservation groups, including the Southern Appalachian Highland Conservancy, Friends of Roan Mountain, the Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance and the Overmountain Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Alongside his wife, Nancy, Barrigar has led the "Peacemaking Committee" at First Presbyterian Church in Elizabethton, Tenn., for more than 20 years - a group that involves church members in a variety of projects and activities focused on improving our natural environment.

**Category: Excellence in Building Green**

**Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis / Sustainable Building Program (Shelby County)** - During 2011, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis was the top builder of single-family, EcoBUILD-certified homes in Shelby County. All Memphis Habitat for Humanity homes are built to this standard, and they are 33 percent more energy efficient, use 30 percent less lumber and generate 75 percent less construction waste than traditional homes. Homes also incorporate many innovative and sustainable features, including Energy Star windows, appliances, lighting and ceiling fans; low-flow toilets, faucets and shower heads; recycled drywall and carpet; brick and cement-fiber board siding; OSB sheathing and house wrap; radiant roof decking; and low-VOC paints and coatings. The Habitat homes are sold at no profit, with zero-interest mortgages to qualified homebuyers who earn at or below 80 percent of the area median income. Projects through the Memphis-area Habitat for Humanity created an infusion of nearly \$3 million into the local economy during 2011, providing steady employment to nearly 60 workers in the hard-hit construction industry, while making affordable home ownership possible for 44 low-income families.

**Category: Excellence in Energy and Renewable Resources**

**The Tennessee Renewable Energy & Economic Development Council (Knox County)** - The Tennessee Renewable Energy and Economic Development Council (TREEDC) demonstrated exceptional leadership in 2011 by partnering with 75 cities and counties to facilitate the advancement of renewable energy and energy efficiency in Tennessee.

TREEDC's biggest mark in 2011 was through its assistance to several small communities with solar and biodiesel development. TREEDC also started a joint program with TVA to help bring more renewable energy to the state via its partnership with the Green Power Switch Program. As part of their efforts, TREEDC hosted six free clean energy forums across the state, reaching out to more than 500 citizens to learn more about the environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy. TREEDC's outreach is designed to plan and facilitate development of Tennessee's abundant natural renewable resources to spur sustainable economic development and to provide long term energy security to the citizens of Tennessee, extended to private businesses, local governments, farmers, energy and service providers, resource agencies and universities.

**Category: Excellence in Environmental Education and Outreach**

**Duck River Watershed Education and Action Project (Marshall County)** - The Duck River Watershed Education and Action Project is an experiential curriculum designed to educate and engage students and citizens about watershed issues, the value of parks and recreation, and how today's youth can positively impact communities. A collaborative effort between the Friends of Henry Horton State Park and the Tennessee Environmental Council, the project involved hands-on biodiversity training, as well as opportunities to better understand our role as active citizens to better the environment, economy and quality of life.

Over 130 Marshall County fifth grade students participated in the project in 2011. Tasks included stream-bank observation and collection of samples from the Duck River. The students then analyzed the data, formed conclusions, and proposed and implemented actions to enhance streamside habitat such as planting trees to increase the riparian buffer. The project's innovative design bridges the gap between classroom studies and applicable field work and engages students and leaders through observation, identifying opportunities for enhancement and proposing solutions.

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**Category: Excellence in Environmental Education and Outreach / Schools**

**Tigers Initiative for Gardening in Urban Settings / TIGUrS Urban Garden (Shelby County)** - The University of Memphis' Tigers Initiative for Gardening in Urban Settings (also known as TIGUrS) serves as a model to students, staff, faculty and the community at large for demonstrating responsible, affordable environmental stewardship through proven urban agriculture methods. The project serves not only as a premier setting for learning sustainable agriculture - it also provides all participants with high-quality, organically produced foods at no cost. The TIGUrS program also demonstrates a model of sustainable urban agriculture that can be easily understood and transferred to almost anywhere in the community, benefiting both the environment and economy. The program imparts direct, hands-on experience with soil reclamation and improvement, organic pests and disease management, and environmentally-conscious structure design and usage. The TIGUrS program is the first and only student-grant funded program of its kind offered at no cost and without restriction by a state university in Tennessee.

**Category: Excellence in Land Use**

**Cherry Farms Conservation Project (Lauderdale County)** - In 2011, Cherry Farms installed a comprehensive array of environmental best management practices that addressed water quality, soil erosion, and plant and animal productivity and health. Many of these efforts were designed to reduce the impacts of cattle access, manure runoff and erosion to Cold Creek, which is listed by the state as an impaired stream. The project included 2,155 feet of exclusion fencing, 3,347 feet of cross fencing, 11,700 square feet of heavy use area, one water well, 2,700 feet of pipeline, eight cattle-watering facilities, one water and sediment control basin, 10 grade control structures, and 300 acres of nutrient management. These measures resulted in a 96 percent decrease in E.coli counts from water samples taken in Cold Creek downstream from Cherry Farms, as well as increased cattle productivity and health due to more efficient and higher quality grazing and watering systems.

**Category: Excellence in Materials Management**

**Cumberland County's Friendly Glass (Cumberland County)** - Glass bottles present unique management challenges due to their weight and volume. In 2011, the Cumberland County Solid Waste Department purchased the Andela Glass Pulverizer System - a machine that crushes glass into a fine sand-like substance. This innovative system facilitates landfill diversion of glass bottles and also creates a marketable product with many beneficial uses. The fine glass product is mixed with sand and spread on county roads during inclement weather, reducing salt usage and runoff into area streams by up to 1,000 tons per year.

Last year, the system contributed to a 20 percent recycling increase in Cumberland County, including approximately 15 tons of glass. More than 1,000 tons of glass is projected to be recycled and processed by the system in 2012. The revenue generated by the sale of the product to the county road department, as well as savings in landfill disposal fees, will provide a return on investment in less than two years.

**Category: Excellence in Natural Heritage**

**Athens Community Initiatives to Restore and Protect Our Natural Heritage (McMinn County)** - The city of Athens Wetland / Rain Garden Demonstration project began as a restoration of 5.3 acres of wetlands on the Oostanuala Creek, the location of the city's E. G. Fisher Public Library. This effort served as a springboard for several other projects and locations throughout the city, including pervious amphitheatres and picnic areas, bio-retention areas, community vegetable gardens and orchards, rain gardens, sink hole buffers, the restoration of a limestone glade and native plantings.

The demonstrations also provide unique educational opportunities for both current residents and future generations. Tours of the various project features are given to educate the public about how wetlands improve water quality, the importance of endangered cedar glades, our relationship to native trees and plants, and other environmental topics. This was all accomplished by a community effort involving only 15,000 people, with the help of numerous grants, donations and partnerships, and more than 600 volunteers.

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**Category: Excellence in Sustainable Performances**

**Food City Energy Conservation Objective (Statewide)** - Food City, headquartered in Abingdon, Virginia, exemplifies superior leadership for a more sustainable future. Operating 62 stores in Tennessee, Food City is incorporating environmental initiatives on multiple fronts including recycling, energy savings, and chemical and waste reduction. Food City is very active in the community and has a history for demonstrating their commitment to local charitable organizations, promoting social sustainability via financial support of schools, utilizing the NuVal healthy food rating system, and providing associate health screenings at each location. Food City also contributes to the state's economic vitality and supports local farmers by purchasing and marketing local products. Food City won the Progressive Grocer / Green Grocer Award for 2011 for its ECO-friendly design at the company's Morristown, Tenn. location.

**Pursuit of Excellence Recognition / Going Gold Twice**

**BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee (Hamilton County)** - BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee was honored with the Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award in 2010 for its 950,000 square-foot Cameron Hill campus, the state's largest LEED Gold-certified project to date. In 2011, BlueCross completed renovation of the 180,000 square foot Gateway Building, an existing four-story structure originally built in 1965, again earning LEED Gold.

Highlights include a 198.24 kilowatt solar array; state-of-the-art water control, utilizing natural storm water filters to remove pollutants; and reuse of 96 percent of the building's existing walls, floors and roof. Additionally, BlueCross BlueShield's enterprise-wide paperless drive, daily recycling efforts, telecommuting program, hybrid shuttle service and use of green cleaning and green pest control services have made a positive impact on the health of the environment and, in turn, the quality of life for Tennesseans.

**Pursuit of Excellence Recognition / Environmental Partnership Initiative**

**The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay State Park (Hamilton County)** - The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay State Park is an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus signature golf course located just minutes from downtown Chattanooga. Its Environmental Partnership Initiative combines multiple environmental programs and projects aimed at improving and preserving wildlife habitat, reducing the impact on natural resources, protecting waterways on and around the golf course, and educating the public on environmental conservation and stewardship issues. A notable highlight is the Harrison Bay Eagle Cam Project, which captures the activities of two bald eagles nesting at the golf course. To date this project has provided over 57,000 visitors an opportunity to view nature up close. Additionally, the Bear Trace at Harrison Bay has been certified as both an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary and as a Groundwater Guardian Green Site. Receiving numerous regional, state and national recognitions for its exemplary stewardship, the Bear Trace at Harrison Bay continues to balance the needs of golfers with the needs of the wildlife that call Harrison Bay home in an environmentally sustainable manner.

For more information about the Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards program, please visit [www.tn.gov/environment/awards](http://www.tn.gov/environment/awards).

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**Editor's Note:** Event photos of today's award winners will be provided beginning Monday, August 27, and will include suggested cutlines and additional information.